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VBH BOT FYI Environment

1 message

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Spring Creek honored as rare birds reappear
Daily Herald
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The National Audubon Society has proclaimed Spring Creek Forest Preserve in Barrington Hills, an Important Bird Area, protecting "globally rare" prairie birds.

Spring Creek's designation is primarily due to its value as a habitat for a number of rare, threatened and endangered grassland bird species. Henslow's sparrows, bobolinks, meadowlarks, grasshopper sparrows and dickcissels long missing from Spring Creek are now nesting in the preserve, thanks to the coordinated restoration efforts of Citizens for Conservation and others.

"If you build it, they will come." Like the ghosts of long gone baseball greats who appeared to play at that now famous baseball field in Iowa, our own "bird ghosts" have almost magically reappeared at Spring Creek.

Within a few seasons of hard work, planning and cooperation among agencies toward prairie restoration in the nearly 4,000-acre forest preserve, our own stars of the past have returned. Surveys show that dramatic increases in the diversity of species and numbers of grassland birds are clearly evident at the preserve.

Recognized as a model of interagency coordination and cooperation, the habitat restoration efforts at Spring Creek demonstrate what can be done when those of like mind and purpose come together on behalf of nature.

Citizens for Conservation, Spring Creek Stewards, Friends of Spring Creek, Audubon Chicago Region, Sierra Club, The Riding Club of Barrington Hills, Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and others have all played important roles in this work. CFC in particular has provided seed, restoration know-how, and significant "boots on the ground" volunteer hours to the mix.

Twenty-five areas in Illinois have been named IBAs, including three in Cook County and two in DuPage. A panel of experts from around Illinois reviewed the nominations and selected the new IBAs.

Recently, recognition of Spring Creek's new IBA status was celebrated at Penny Road Pond in the preserve. Speakers included Steve Bylina, general superintendent, Forest Preserve District of Cook County; Janice Engle, field supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Wendy Paulson, bird monitor and conservationist; Judy Pollock, director of

bird conservation, Audubon Chicago Region and John Rogner, assistant director, Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

All speakers touched upon the common theme of the unique degree of cooperation it took to bring about the progress to date at Spring Creek. Each also made note of the exceptional spirit of volunteerism that was most instrumental in bringing about the IBA status at the forest preserve.

Following the formal program and refreshments, Stephen Packard of Audubon Chicago Region and Wendy Paulson of Barrington Hills, led bird walks out across Galloping Hill.

As if on cue, the birds, on whose behalf many had worked so hard for so long, made their appearances. The clear blue skies over the Galloping Hill restoration site came alive with bobolinks, meadow larks, tree swallows, and all of the target species that afforded Spring Creek its Important Bird Area designation.

Their own tribute one might guess, and a perfect conclusion to a fine program and a landmark event on a beautiful morning at Spring Creek, a very special preserve.

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